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Former CIA official cites lack of manpower

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The United States' ability to be prepared for economic, social or military actions around the world is seriously hampered by a lack of manpower.

So stated former Adm. Bobby Inman, who resigned as deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency in June 1982 to head a new \$50-million research corporation. Inman spoke at Claremont McKenna College Wednesday morning.

Inman served as director of Naval Intelligence from 1974-76, vice director of Defense Intelligence in 1976-77 and director of the National Security Agency from 1977 until his CIA appointment in February 1981.

He resigned from the Navy last July 1.

"I agreed to President Reagan's request to join the CIA for a short time and inaugurate some new programs," Inman said. "The president knew I would not stay. But I helped get my successor in place to continue the projects."

The former intelligence officer was charged by the administration with formulating plans to rebuild the national defense security system over the next seven years.

Inman said the CIA's strength has been seriously diminished in the past 20 years.

Inman's career in intelligence should assist him as chief executive officer of a unique firm called Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corp., a research operation funded by Control Data, Digital Equipment, Honeywell, Sperry Corp. other computer companies.

The new corporation will concentrate on keeping ahead of Japanese technology in an attempt to protect the American computer market.

Japan has announced that it hopes to develop a new super computer by 1990 that works 10 times faster than the best models on the U.S. drawing boards.

Inman will direct research and development to help U.S. firms produce competitive goods.

"If successful, our firm will become a role model for other industries to protect U.S. markets, such as, in hindsight, we know that auto manufacturers should have done," Inman said during a press conference before he met with students.

During his public speech, Inman discussed the state of U.S. intelligence.

"There are a substantial number of agents from both friendly and unfriendly nations circulating in our country. It's so easy," Inman said.

"We were caught by surprise in Iran and other countries because of serious cutbacks in the CIA budget and the subsequent loss of manpower.

"While the administration felt we were getting information from Iran through liaison contacts, what we really needed were intelligent people who understood the language circulating in mosques and coffeehouses.

"One of our major shortfalls in Iran was the failure to know the degree of the shah's illness and how it affected his judgment," he added.

While U.S. intelligence information collection is falling behind, the Russians have advanced in the past 15 year, Inman noted.

The Russians circulate freely in Washington, D.C., collecting all types of information — formal and gossip, he told the students.

"At least the U.S. is better informed than before World War II," he added. "There will be no more Pearl Harbors but we need more lead time than possible under present information gathering.

"We have been caught short in Latin America by not having the personnel and information we needed," he stated.

Inman disagrees with some government officials who believe the use of satellites for intelligence gathering has precluded the need for agents in foreign nations.

"Using satellites for observation of weapon testing in Russia is fine if the tests are above ground. But for underground testing, on-site observation is vital. You must know about exact geography and other information even to calculate seismicologic reports.

"One of my concerns is that we are trading technology for manpower. We need manpower to make sense of all the information which satellites can gather."

He said the Russian's KGB has intelligence agents inside the country as well as spread throughout the world.

One of the newest changes Inman sees in Russian under its present leadership is faster tactical response by the Soviets to U.S. statements. This week, they called a press conference within 48 hours to respond to a statement by Vice President George Bush. In the past, the response wouldn't have been made until two weeks later, he said.

In discussing espionage within England's intelligence agency, Inman said: "I don't know if the British have more spies or they are just better at catching them."

He feels that there are no spies in the top ranks of the CIA.

"My guess is that there are no spies in the top core of the CIA, but in the lower ranks, there are always people willing to sell secrets for cash," he reported.

According to Inman, leaks of "confidential" information have been a "way of life" in Washington, D.C.

"The media gets the information in three ways: A disgruntled employee — the over the transom bit — damaging but limited; those out to sell programs to damage someone else's program — often distorted information; and most damaging, top-level government information leaked by people who haven't the time to understand what's going on — so they gossip.

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